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The CIA And The Students

Defenders of the Central Intelligence Agency in the currently furious debate over its supplying funds to members of the National Student Association insist that CIA in no way attached strings to its grants.

At this stage of the controversy, no one has come forth with substantial facts indicating that the directors of the intelligence agency in any way attempted to tie purse strings to academic freedom and student thought. Some former NSA officers either having knowledge of the CIA gifts or

being direct beneficiaries of those funds for foreign travel and study, on the contrary, have said that no controls over their views on U. S. policy were either asked or hinted in exchange for CIA funds.

It would be unrealistic, *The News* thinks, to contend that the CIA did not consider its previously disguised contributions to NSA as an investment which would earn returns. Neither do we think that the students who knew the source of the funds failed to realize the implications. If they were able during their overseas visits to provide information derived from international student activities without actual involvement in sleuthing, we'd imagine some of them would do just that.

Whether CIA obtained value received or whether it received no information of consequence from NSA members only CIA knows. Former CIA Director Allen Dulles says that CIA received what it wanted for its funds because the presence of American students at international students' sessions put a damper on Communist groups, taking over the meetings and using them as propaganda forums.

One might argue interminably over the question of whether or not an official American government agency should be in any way involved in student affairs on any basis.

Senator Gale McGee (D-Wyo.), declaring that there is no evidence that the CIA in any way attempted to influence student thought, insists that the U. S., involved in the "jungle" of international intrigue, may reasonably be expected to seek out information in any way it can in its own interests. Other senators, including Democratic Majority Leader Mike Mansfield of Montana, take a dimmer view of CIA actions in this particular matter and suggest that the Senate and the administration look more closely into CIA affairs.

CIA's position as a super-secret agency, accountable only to the President and the National Security Council, was broadly-debated in the Senate during the 89th Congress. It would be unfortunate now, just as we viewed the matter then, for CIA's linen to be washed on the Senate floor, thereby removing whatever starch it possesses as a security function.

We think it admissible to question the CIA's discretion in its relations with NSA, but we are not about to believe that it did in fact or expected to push young students into the midst of cloak-and-dagger activities. As gatherers of occasionally helpful scraps of information, perhaps. As spies, no.

So little is actually known of CIA operations outside its own confines and by those few privy to its activities that a clear assessment of its contributions to the nation's interest would be extremely hard to come by.

An effort to discredit the CIA is very much alive, and pressures will continue within Congress and in other areas.

If the CIA is to continue as an effective instrument, however, parting the curtain on its innermost activities is the surest way to completely destroy its reason for being. And the debate over the NSA affair, in our opinion, is not sufficient grounds for demanding a curtain call.